

## THE BEST OF GUATEMALA

### ST45 – THE MAYAN WORLD

**Tue: WELCOME TO THE LAND OF ETERNAL SPRING!** On arrival at Guatemala's La Aurora Airport, our representative will transfer you to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

**Wed:** At 08:00 a.m., you will be picked up at your hotel a panoramic sightseeing tour of Guatemala City where the principal sites you will see include the National Palace, Cathedral, and Civic Center Complex. You will also visit residential areas, for an overall view of our rapidly growing metropolis (NO shorts or bathing suits permitted). Then continue to Iximché, which dates from the 15th Century and it was the Capital of the Chackchiqueles. The architecture of the site included a number of pyramid-temples, palaces and two Mesoamerican ball courts. Excavators uncovered the poorly preserved remains of painted murals on some of the buildings and ample evidence of human sacrifice. The ruins of Iximché were declared a Guatemalan National Monument in the 1960s. The site has a small museum displaying a number of pieces found there, including sculptures and ceramics. Continue to Chichicastenango for overnight accommodations.

**Thu:** Today is market day in Chichicastenango! Visit the most colorful and picturesque Indian open-air market in the country. Hundreds of Indians from the surrounding countryside gather to barter their goods and products. Also, witness the captivating religious ceremonies held on the steps and inside the 400-year old Church of Santo Tomás (No shorts or bathing suits are allowed inside the Church, PLEASE NO PHOTOGRAPHS INSIDE THE CHURCH). Continue your transfer to Quetzaltenango. It is currently considered as the second most important city of Guatemala, due to its size, industrial, cultural, and commercial activity. It has preserved its colonial architecture. Several neo-classical buildings can be seen, among which those are located around the Centroamerica Park, considered the hearth of the city. East of the plaza lies the Espiritu Santo (Holly Spirit) Cathedral with its two facades. The first one, first constructed in 1535, is very ornamented, and the latter, of neo-classical style, forms part of a structure made of several domes which dates back to 1899. on the south end of the park is another building with such characteristics, called La Casa de la Cultura, where the Natural History Museum is housed, and which contains a collection of pre-Hispanic pieces and historical memorabilia. Upon arrival you will be transferred to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

**Fri:** This morning you will visit Almolonga market known for its vegetables and fruits cultivated on small parcels and from which products are exported to Central America and Mexico. Continue your visit to San Andrés Xecul which has an important XVI century temple, with a fabulous bright-yellow façade, the color which is representative of the local huipil (or indigenous blouse). There are saints and angels sitting next to corncobs and quetzal birds on the facade. Then you will visit San Francisco El Alto, with its typical market where people gather in front of City Hall to sell their products and handicrafts. Continue your transfer to Lake Atitlán, one of the most beautiful in the world, with its crystalline-azure waters in the crater bowl below. Atitlán is the ideal place to come in contact with Guatemalan folklore. Twelve Indian villages surround the Lake, and their inhabitants are descendants from the great Quiché, Cackchiquel, and Tzutuhil nations. Overnight accommodations at Lake Atitlán.

**Sat:** At 09:00 a.m., you will board the motor launch to cross Lake Atitlán to the picturesque Indian village of Santiago Atitlán, one of the twelve lake-shore villages surrounding the Lake. Enjoy this bustling Indian community, where weavers work the colorful textiles. Continue, your transfer to Antigua Guatemala, the most important and enchanting city of colonial Guatemala. Founded by the Spaniards in 1543, nowadays Antigua is a beautiful blend of ruins, restored

colonial buildings, and new buildings in colonial style. It was declared “Monument of America” in 1965. Overnight accommodations in Antigua Guatemala.

**Sun:** This morning, you will be picked up at your hotel for your Antigua Guatemala sightseeing tour. Visit the Central Plaza, which is surrounded by the antique Cathedral, the Municipal Government Building, and the Palace of the Captains General; colonial churches and monasteries, primitive foot-looms where colorful textiles are woven, and a jade factory where this stone is worked into beautiful jewelry. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Guatemala City for overnight accommodations.

**Mon:** At 7:00 am, the trip to Alta Verapaz will begin, to visit the Biotopo del Quetzal. It was created for the protection of the Quetzal, which is the national bird and is in danger of extinction. This protected habitat was established in 1976 by Mario Dary and since then it is one of the most important tourist destinations in the country. Given its location and wooded area, the place has a variety of fauna and flora that can be found from hummingbirds to orioles. You will also visit Orquigonía, a wonderful place that is a corner of exuberant nature where the visitor can see and learn of orchids, other forest plants, admire its beauty in its natural state and breathe the pure air peace and tranquility in the green heart of Guatemala. It is a relatively small area but it has a great biodiversity, since its acquisition in 2007, the wooded land has been regenerated naturally and now it is a refuge not only for orchids but also for a large number of plants such as: tree ferns, tillandsias, bromeliads, forest species with fruits and epiphytes with flowers. Overnight accommodations at (hotel).

**Tue:** This morning you will be picked up at your hotel to visit Semuc Champey which is located in the municipality of Lanquín, on the Cahabón river. Semuc Champey is built by a natural bridge of about 500 meters long, inside which the Cahabón River circulates underground, in what is known as a *siguán*. In the upper part a great variety of pools of 1 to 3 meters deep is formed, which are fed by mountain springs. These pools are located in a small canyon formed by sedimentary rock and limestone typical of the highlands of the Polochic valley. Overnight accommodations at (hotel)..

**Wed:** At 07:00 a.m., depart to Copán, Honduras. After completing official immigration formalities, continue to the archaeological site of Copán. As you step inside the park, witness elaborate stone sculptures everywhere. As you walk into the dramatic expanse of the Great Plaza you are witness of the cultural achievements of the ancient Maya. Copán’s main plaza contains the greatest collection of Maya sculptures in Central America. Take time to explore and marvel at the beautiful Mayan stelae, majestic temples, and complete ball court. Overnight accommodations at (hotel).

**Thu:** This morning, transfer to the Mayan site of Quiriguá, where extraordinary monuments include 12 carved stelae, 4 zoomorphs, enormous carved stones of mythological animal forms, and unrestored temples. Dates recorded are at exact intervals of 800 days. Overnight accommodations at (hotel).

**Fri:** You will be transferred by launch to Río Dulce, undoubtedly one of the country’s most unique tourist attractions. The enormous Río Dulce offers a natural experience; while navigating on its beautiful waters one enjoys the riverine forest and listens to the sounds of the howler monkeys. The nice spots on the riverside include natural forests and bathing places in a unique natural environment. Several islands and islets along the river are the nesting grounds for thousands of aquatic birds which offer beautiful displays as they set flight and when they feed in large groups on the river waters. A section of the river is much wider, thus forming a 60 square kilometer water deposit, called El Golfete, which can be considered a river and a lake at the same time. Then transfer to Peten for overnight accommodations.

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**Sat:** Today you will visit Yaxhá. The city is contemporary to Tikal, and is located on the northeastern side of the Lake Yaxhá. Over 1,400 monuments have been mapped and an excavation program has been taken place in the last 10 years, exposing some of its magnificent architecture. Also, visit ball courts, residential and religious areas like the Maler Group, North Acropolis recently restored, and finally Temple 216, over 90 feet high. Continue your visit to Topoxté located in seasonal islands, on the western side of Lake Yaxhá. Its buildings are similar to those of Tulúm in Yucatan, and it was inhabited during 900 – 1,200 AD., known as post classic. Overnight accommodations at (Hotel).

**Sun:** Today, you will go back more than 2,000 years in time when you visit the Tikal National Park. This morning, our representative will take you to the Mayan City of Tikal which is located in the center of the National Park that bears its name, and has an extension of 222 square miles. Tikal was inhabited from 600 BC., till 869 AD. Its highlight was between 690 till 850 AD., a time period known by archaeologists as the Late Classic. Visit the Twin-Pyramid Complexes “Q” and “R”, Lost World Complex where the Great Pyramid and Temple 5C-49 are the most important. Also, visit Temple III and the Palace of the Windows, the Great Plaza, squared off with the pyramids of the Grand Jaguar and the Masks, the Palace of the Nobles, and Pyramid IV. This one is the highest of the Mayan pyramids, from its top a complete view of Tikal and its surrounding jungle can be enjoyed. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Santa Elena’s Airport to board the flight to Guatemala City. On arrival, our representative will transfer you to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

**Mon:** You will be transferred to the airport three hours prior your flight’s departure time

## ST 27 – ON THE GUATEMALA PASS

**Fri: WELCOME TO THE LAND OF ETERNAL SPRING!** On arrival at Guatemala's La Aurora Airport, our representative will transfer you to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

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**Sun:** In the morning you will be picked up at your hotel for your transfer to Chichicastenango. Visit the most colorful and picturesque Indian open-air market in the country. Hundreds of Indians from the surrounding countryside gather to barter their goods and products. Also, witness the captivating religious ceremonies held on the steps and inside the 400-year old Church of Santo Tomás (No shorts or bathing suits are allowed inside the Church, PLEASE NO PHOTOGRAPHS INSIDE THE CHURCH). Continue your transfer to Lake Atitlán, one of the most beautiful in the world, with its crystalline-azure waters in the crater bowl below. Atitlán is the ideal place to come in contact with Guatemalan folklore. Twelve Indian villages surround the Lake, and their inhabitants are descendants from the great Quiché, Cackchiquel, and Tzutuhil nations. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Guatemala City for overnight accommodations.

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include natural forests and bathing places in a unique natural environment. Several islands and islets along the river are the nesting grounds for thousands of aquatic birds which offer beautiful displays as they set flight and when they feed in large groups on the river waters. A section of the river is much wider, thus forming a 60 square kilometer water deposit, called El Golfete, which can be considered a river and a lake at the same time. Then, transfer to Peten for overnight accommodations.

**Sat:** Today we will take you to Yaxhá. The city is contemporary to Tikal, and is located on the northeastern side of the Lake Yaxhá. Over 1,400 monuments have been mapped and an excavation program has been taken place in the last 10 years, exposing some of its magnificent architecture. Also, visit ball courts, residential and religious areas like the Maler Group, North Acropolis recently restored, and finally Temple 216, over 90 feet high. Continue your visit to Topoxté located in seasonal islands, on the western side of Lake Yaxhá. Its buildings are similar to those of Tulum in Yucatan, and it was inhabited during 900 – 1,200 AD., known as post classic. Overnight accommodations at (Hotel).

**Sun:** Today, you will go back more than 2,000 years in time when you visit the Tikal National Park. This morning, our representative will take you to the Mayan City of Tikal which is located in the center of the National Park that bears its name, and has an extension of 222 square miles. Tikal was inhabited from 600 BC., till 869 AD. Its highlight was between 690 till 850 AD., a time period known by archaeologists as the Late Classic. Visit the Twin-Pyramid Complexes “Q” and “R”, Lost World Complex where the Great Pyramid and Temple 5C-49 are the most important. Also, visit Temple III and the Palace of the Windows, the Great Plaza, squared off with the pyramids of the Grand Jaguar and the Masks, the Palace of the Nobles, and Pyramid IV. This one is the highest of the Mayan pyramids, from its top a complete view of Tikal and its surrounding jungle can be enjoyed. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Santa Elena’s Airport to board the flight to Guatemala City. On arrival, our representative will transfer you to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

**Mon:** You will be transferred to the airport three hours prior your flight’s departure time.

ST05 – SWEET GUATEMALA

**Tue or Fri: WELCOME TO THE LAND OF ETERNAL SPRING!** On arrival at Guatemala's La Aurora Airport, our representative will transfer you to your hotel for overnight accommodations.

**Wed or Sat:** At 09:00 a.m., you will be picked up at your hotel for your transfer to Antigua Guatemala, the most important and enchanting city of colonial Guatemala. Founded by the Spaniards in 1543, nowadays Antigua is a beautiful blend of ruins, restored colonial buildings, and new buildings in colonial style. It was declared “Monument of America” in 1965. Visit the Central Plaza which is surrounded by the antique Cathedral, the Municipal Government Building, and the Palace of the Captains General; colonial churches and monasteries, primitive foot-loom where colorful textiles are woven, and a jade factory where this stone is worked into beautiful jewelry. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Chichicastenango for overnight accommodations.

**Thu or Sun:** In the morning you will be picked up at your hotel for your transfer to Chichicastenango. Visit the most colorful and picturesque Indian open-air market in the country. Hundreds of Indians from the surrounding countryside gather to barter their goods and products. Also, witness the captivating religious ceremonies held on the steps and inside the 400-year old Church of Santo Tomás (No shorts or bathing suits are allowed inside the Church, PLEASE NO PHOTOGRAPHS INSIDE THE CHURCH). Continue your transfer to Lake Atitlán, one of the most beautiful in the world, with its crystalline-azure waters in the crater bowl below. Atitlán is the ideal place to come in contact with Guatemalan folklore. Twelve Indian villages surround the Lake, and their inhabitants are descendants from the great Quiché, Cackchiquel, and Tzutuhil nations. In the afternoon, you will be transferred to Guatemala City for overnight accommodations.

**Fri or Mon:** At 04:30 a.m., you will be picked up at your hotel in Guatemala City for your transfer to the airport to board the flight to Flores, Petén. On arrival, our representative will take you to Ceibal, the Mayan Archaeological site situated in Sayaxché, near the banks of La Pasión River where you can see crocodiles and exotic birds. The Ceibal Stelae is among the finest and best-preserved sculptures of the late Classic Period. Because of the hardness of the local stone, which has withstood centuries of rain, root penetration, and falling trees, it is often called the “Maya Art Gallery”. One of its most important structures is a round stone, which is considered very rare in the Mesoamerican area. Overnight accommodations at (Hotel).

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## ST 47 – RELIVE ITS MISTERIES

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